

Biomedical and Health Informatics Lecture Series

Tuesday, February 2, 2010
12:00 - 12:50 p.m., Room T-663

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“Improving access to public health messages for low English proficiency individuals”

The availability and accessibility of accurate, up-to-date, health information is a necessary prerequisite for developing, maintaining, and improving health literacy. For the over 46 million people living in the United States that have limited English proficiency (LEP) however, obtaining accurate and up-to-date health information can be very challenging. Health-related information is primarily communicated in English and health materials in languages other than English remain scarce. Lack of access to language-appropriate health information may contribute significantly to poor health literacy, and consequently poor health outcomes (IOM, 2004). To address this problem Dr. Turner in collaboration with Dr. Kirchhoff (Electrical Engineering) have conducted a pilot study to investigate current trends in public health translation and to develop a public health specific machine translation system to assist in the production of multilingual public health materials. The methods and results of this pilot study will be presented. The long term goal of this proposed research is to improve health literacy for LEP populations through improving the availability of and access to multilingual health information.

Dr. Turner is an Assistant Professor in the School of Public Health and the School of Medicine at the University of Washington (UW). She has over twenty years of clinical experience in pediatrics, pediatric hematology-oncology, and public health. Dr. Turner's informatics training includes a Master's Degree in Library and Information Sciences (2001) and completion of a National Library of Medicine Fellowship in Medical Informatics (2004). Dr. Turner's background in medicine, information sciences and public health brings a unique perspective to health informatics research. With an interest in user-centered design, she has researched the information needs and workflow of public health practitioners with the goal of improving the design of information systems for public health. Over the last ten years her research has focused on improving the transfer of health information within public health practice using qualitative methods and natural language processing technology.

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<http://courses.washington.edu/mebi590/past.lecture.schedules.html>